Equality of Opportunity and Freedom from Discrimination

MHR Connections

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People talked and the Commission listened

Service animal consultations underway

The doors to the first service animal consultation opened at 9:00 and the room was full by 9:30. Those who came included persons who were blind and visually impaired, persons who were Deaf and hard of hearing, and persons with invisible disabilities. Many were accompanied by their service dog or comfort dog. Also in the room were service providers and employers from school boards, restaurants, hotels, rental agencies, health care and government. The main topic on the agenda was the right of persons with disabilities to access public services accompanied by their service animals (usually dogs).

The Commission held two consultations on this topic in Winnipeg. A third consultation is planned for Brandon in October. While dogs have provided guiding services for blind persons for several decades, the types of services performed by service dogs and the number of persons with disabilities who can benefit from such dogs has significantly increased in Manitoba. One theme quickly emerged: there is a definite need for more information about service animals and how they should be accommodated by employers and service-providers. As one participant said, "Service providers need the right information so that they can do the right thing.

Azim Jiwa (right) welcomed the participants and explained the existing rights and responsibilities. Yvonne Peters (centre) explained the reason for the consultations and what the Commission hoped could be achieved. Sarah Lugtig, (former Legal Counsel for the Commission and presently working at the University of Manitoba) took on the task of moderating the discussion.

Many participants requested further guidance on issues such as: the difference between a service animal, a companion animal and a comfort animal; the standards for training

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THE MANITOBA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

LA COMMISSION DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE DU MANITOBA

www.manitobahumanrights.ca

The Rights Connection
by Yvonne Peters Chairperson

On September 19, 2014 I had the opportunity of a life time to attend the opening ceremonies of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. It was a deeply moving and gratifying experience. The museum is a work of beauty and wonder. It is also a monumental tribute to the importance and ideal of human rights.

The museum moves human rights from the sidelines to centre stage. With its opening it begins a dialogue about the human rights atrocities committed by Canada, the oppression and torture of peoples throughout the world and the many injustices and acts of discrimination that continue to exist. It also invites important public debate regarding how certain human rights are understood and depicted. Thanks to the museum, human rights are making their way into mainstream conversation.

The museum is not just about telling stories. It also sets the gold standard in creating an environment that is fully accessible and welcoming to all. Using innovation and technology it provides information in a variety of languages including French and English sign language; visual media and print information that is useable by blind and visually impaired persons; and access to all parts of the museum for persons with mobility disabilities.

I think a story told to me by a friend sums up the potential power and impact of the museum. My friend worked with a designer on some of the exhibit features of the museum. At first the designer was frustrated by the relentless demand that all features be fully accessible. However, upon completion, the designer told my friend that he could never again undertake a project that wasn't designed to be fully accessible. This gives me hope that the museum will be a beacon of change, greater understanding and desire for a better world.

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> ***"Service providers need the right information so that they can do the right thing".***

service dogs; and whether there should be an identification or registration system of service dogs in Manitoba.

Users of service animals described the barriers they encountered in accessing services such as finding an understanding family physician, being asked to leave a restaurant and having confrontations with service-providers who were uninformed about the role of service dogs. Users explained that it is their obligation to maintain the training of their dog. They also indicated their willingness to educate the public but confessed that sometimes they suffer from "education fatigue."

Following the first two consultations, Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners Yvonne Peters said, "Consultations are a first step in exchanging information and ideas between service dog users and employers and service-providers. We heard the expected and unexpected. The most important message is that something must be done to address the need for more information about the use of service animals in public places."

Azim Jiwa Executive Director of the Commission agreed. "Those who participated suggested very real possibilities on how to move forward. We have now taken on the task of helping to clarify the rights and responsibilities of both users and service providers," he said. "We have also taken on the huge responsibility of taking their message forward."

The final consultation will take place in Brandon on October 2, 2014.

Upcoming events

Women's Legal Education and Action Fund
LEAF invites you to its 24th annual **Persons Day Breakfast** on Thursday, October 16 from 7:15 - 9:00 a.m. at the Winnipeg Convention Centre.
Guest Speaker: Shulamith Koenig, founding president of the People's Movement for Human Rights Learning.
Tickets are $25 at McNally Robinson Booksellers: 1-800-561-1833, Manitoba Status of Women: 204-945-6281 and LEAF Manitoba: 204-453-1379, leafmb@mymts.net.
Proceeds support the advancement of equality for women and girls

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Women's History Month 2014
Celebrating Women in Leadership
Featuring Guest Speaker: **Jodi Moskal**
Chair, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce
& Co-owner, Moskal Electric
Wednesday, October 29, 2014
11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Rotunda, Manitoba Legislative Building
RSVP by Friday, October 24, 2014 to:
(204) 945-6281, 1-800-263-0234 or msw@gov.mb.ca

RIGHTS & LIBERTIES

Time to recognize exceptional human rights work

Many deserve recognition and now is the time to nominate someone who does.

The Annual Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba and the Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award are given out each year to those individuals or groups who contribute to the advancement of human dignity and the elimination of discrimination in the province.

The celebration of the accomplishments of these groups or individuals will take place on December 9, 2014, the eve of International Human Rights Day.

Before the celebrations however, we have to find this year's recipients. If you know of someone deserving of this award, please let us know.

The partnership of the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Manitoba Human Rights Commission are again working together to host this annual event.

The Annual Human Rights Commitment Award of Manitoba recognizes those who have promoted respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and have advanced the rights of Manitobans.

The Annual Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award recognizes the work of a person or group of people, 25 years old and under that has had an impact on the advancement of human rights as guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and human rights legislation in Manitoba.

The deadline for submissions is November 14, 2014.

More information on how to nominate individuals for either of these awards will be on the Manitoba Human Rights website the first week in October. For further information please email hrc@gov.mb.ca and please put Human Rights Awards in the subject line.

> ***"It is important for us to remember that half the battle is human rights; the other half is human responsibility."***
> Megan Fultz recipient of the 2013
> Sybil Shack Human Rights Youth Award